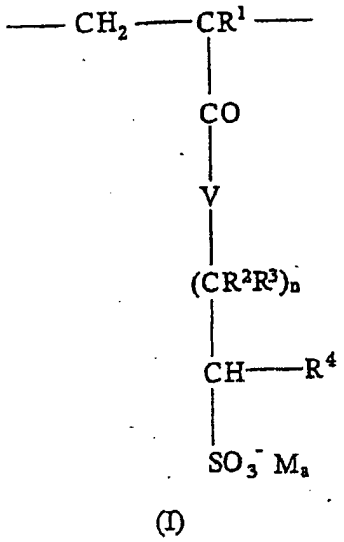
IN THE CLAIMS:

1-17 (canceled)

18. (withdrawn amended) A water-soluble copolymer or terpolymer which contains sulfo groups and has a number average molecular weight of from 50,000 to 20,000,000 g/mol and comprises:

a) from 3 to 96 mol% of a structural group of formula I



(I)

wherein R^1 is hydrogen or methyl,

R^2, R^3, R^4 is hydrogen, an aliphatic hydrocarbon residue having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, or a phenyl residue which may be unsubstituted or substituted by methyl groups,

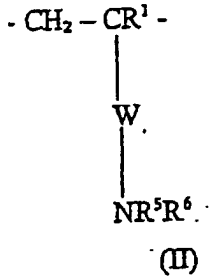
V is NH or oxygen,

M is hydrogen, a monovalent or divalent metal cation, ammonium or an organic amine residue,

n is ~~N is~~ 1 to 5,

a is ½ ~~A is½~~ or 1,

b) from 3 to 96 mol% of a structural group of formula II



(II)

wherein W is $-CO(O)-(CH_2)_x-$ or $-CO-NR^2-(CH_2)_x-$,

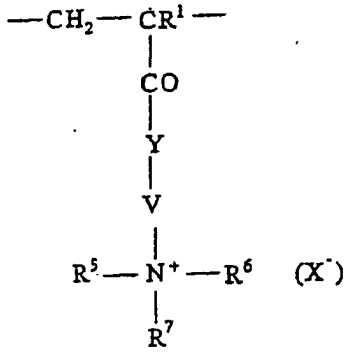
x is from 1 to 6,

R^5 and R^6 are independently hydrogen, a substituted or unsubstituted aliphatic hydrocarbon residue having from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, a cycloaliphatic hydrocarbon residue having from 5 to 8 carbon atoms, or an aryl residue having from 6 to 14 carbon atoms, and

R^1 and R^2 are as defined above,

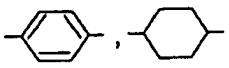
and/or

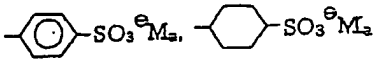
c) from 0.05 to 75 mol% of a structural group of formula III



(III)

wherein Y is O, NH or NR^5,

V is $-(CH_2)_x-$,  ,

R^7 is R^5 or R^6, $-(CH_2)_x-SO_3^{\ominus}M_a$,  ,

X is halogen, C_1-C_4-alkylsulfate or C_1-C_4-alkylsulfonate,

and R^1, R^5, R^6, M, a and x are as defined above.

19. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein the monovalent or divalent cation is a sodium, potassium, calcium or magnesium ion and X is chlorine, bromine, sulfate or methylsulfate.

20. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein the structural group a) comprises 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or salts thereof.

21. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein up to 50 mol% of the structural groups a), b) or c) are replaced by structural units derived from acrylamide or N,N-dimethylacrylamide monomers.

22. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein up to 50 mol% of the structural groups a) are replaced by other structural units which contain sulfo groups and are derived from methallylsulfonic acid or allylsulfonic acid monomers.

23. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein the organic amine residues are preferably substituted ammonium groups derived from primary, secondary or tertiary C_1-C_{20}-alkylamines, C_1-C_{20}-alkanolamines, C_5-C_8-cycloalkylamines and C_6-C_{14}-arylamines.

24. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein the hydrocarbon or aryl residues of R^5 and R^6 are further substituted with hydroxyl, carboxyl or sulfonic acid groups.

25. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, comprising from 40 to 80 mol% of the structural group a), from 10 to 55 mol% of the structural group b) and/or from 7 to 25 mol% of the structural group c).

26. (previously presented)The copolymer as claimed in claim 18, wherein the mole fraction of the structural group c) is at least 5 mol% lower than the mole fraction of the structural group a).

27. (previously presented)A process for preparing the copolymer as claimed in claim 18, comprising adding from 3 to 96 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group a), from 3 to 96 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group b) and/or from 0.05 to 75 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group c) in the form of a free-radical, ionic or complex-coordinative bulk, solution, gel, emulsion, dispersion or suspension polymerization and reacting to form the copolymer.

28. (previously presented)The process as claimed in claim 27, wherein from 40 to 80 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group a), from 10 to 55 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group b) and/or from 2 to 30 mol% of a monomer forming the structural group c) are reacted.

29. (previously presented)The process as claimed in claim 27, wherein the reaction is carried out in the form of a gel polymerization in the aqueous phase.

30. (previously presented)The process as claimed in claim 29, wherein the gel polymerization is carried out at a temperature of from -5° to +50°C and a concentration of the aqueous solution of from 40 to 70% by weight.

31. (currently amended) A composition that is an aqueous building material system, a water-based ~~system a water based~~ paint or coating system comprising a sufficient amount of the copolymer of claim 18 to provide a stabilizing effect.

32. (previously presented)The composition as claimed in claim 31, wherein the copolymers and terpolymers are used in an amount of from 0.01 to 5% by weight, based on the dry weight of the building material system, paint system or coating system.

33. (previously presented)The composition as claimed in claim 31, wherein the aqueous building material systems comprises cement, lime, gypsum plaster, anhydrite, as hydraulic binders.

34. (previously presented)The composition as claimed in claim 14, wherein the copolymers or terpolymers are in the form of an aqueous solution having a solids content of from 0.2 to 3% by weight.